

Strategic Importance of Israel

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Israel has increasingly become a country of strategic importance to the United States. Since its independence Israel has had a partnership with the United States that has continued to flourish over the years. The values and beliefs shared by the people of both countries put our cultures in close proximity. Both the United States and Israel share the same ideology in forms of government, economic policies, the war on terrorism, and the right of Israel to protect itself from its enemies.

On May 14th, 1948 Israel proclaimed itself as a state. This proclamation was recognized almost immediately by the United States and the USSR followed suit only three days later. In the beginning of its fight as an independent Jewish state, it was not the U.S., but the USSR who provided the main support to Israel. The USSR provided Israel with the weapons it needed to defend itself from its Arab enemies. While the U.S. did supply some weapons it was little help because the weapons had to be smuggled into the country due to an American embargo.

No one refers any longer, as many once did, to Israel as the 51st state of the union. (Norman Podhoretz), notwithstanding, Israel has enjoyed the overwhelming support of the United States during the first half-century of its existence. The U.S. has always been, and sometimes, Israel's only friend among nations. Every U.S. president has supported the state during its wars with its Arab neighbors. Clear support for Israel was recently made by George W. Bush on May 18th 2004, "The United States is strongly committed, and I am strongly committed, to the security of Israel as a vibrant Jewish state." (President George W. Bush)

The key to the Israelis strength in the Middle East has been the monetary support it has enjoyed from the U.S. since the early 1970's. It was through dollars given from the U.S. that Israel was capable of building such a strong military among its Arab neighbors. In 1973 during the Yom Kippur War 71 Senators and 269 representatives expedited a 2.2 billion dollar emergency aid package to Israel which was marked as the first time the U.S. provided an outright

grant of arms to Israel. (Qtd. in United Jerusalem, 2) In 2003 Israel was the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid with 2.1 billion in military aid and 600 million in economic aid. This obviously shows the world that the U.S. is committed to keeping a strong steadfast relationship with Israel regardless of what the appearance is to Israel's Arab neighbors.

The Israelis receive billions in financial support every year from the U.S. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is the most formidable weapon in the Jewish lobby's arsenal of political persuasion. They are so strong that 70-80 percent of the members of the National Security Council go along with whatever the AIPAC wants. For every dollar spent on a citizen in Africa, the US spends \$250.00 on an Israeli citizen. For the past 25 years, America has given Israel about \$3 billion dollars annually. Usually 60 percent of this money goes to the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), and 40 percent goes to the Israeli economy. Along with this Israel receives almost as much in hidden benefits, i.e.... military support for their defense budget, and forgiven loans and grants. (New Statesmen, London)

When we look at the religious factors of the relationship with Israel a substantial amount of financial support and political pull is obvious. The "stand for Israel" poll, found that two-thirds of American evangelists support Israel in actions against Palestine. Over 56 percent support Israel for political reasons, and 28 percent support because of the "end times." When George Bush called for Ariel Sharon to withdraw immediately from his siege of Jenin, almost immediately Pat Robertson's followers sent over 100,000 e-mails, letters, and made personal visits to Congress. Christian Zionists send more than \$25 million every year to Israel to fund settlements, and 100,000 Evangelical churchgoers travel to, and raise funds for Israel. Like the United States, Israel is primarily made up of immigrants. Both countries began as pioneering societies and today both are still receiving and integrating new immigrants. Both countries want immigrants that will contribute to the economy and who will join, participate in,

and make meaningful contributions to their respective societies. Both countries have faced similar problems with immigration in the past. Fueled by Arab complaints in the early 1900's, immigration to Israel was put at a limit of no more than 10,000 people a year.

(<http://www.jewishpublicaffairs.org>). In the U.S. illegal immigrants has and continues to be a problem. In the two societies comparatively anyone can become a citizen however Israel insists, though not in law, that in order to become a citizen you convert to the Jewish faith.

Israel and the United States share similar outlooks on religious policy in both respective countries. While the world knows that the U.S. allows anyone to embrace any religion they wish too, few know that Israel offers the same system to its citizens. The country of Israel of course is comprised of mostly Jewish faith based citizens accounting for 80.1% of the population. What accounts for the other 19.9% religious make-up of Israel? Surprisingly enough 14.6% of the population is actually of the Muslim faith comprised of almost all Sunni Muslim. Christians comprise 2.1% of the population and the remaining 3.2% of the population is comprised of other religious practices. (<http://www.eia.doe.gov>)

Some believe that the non-Jewish faith citizens receive unfair treatment in Israel but this has not been proven with substantial evidence. Israel's Zionism has been the basis for this accusation. Zionism is defined as the national movement for the return of the Jewish people to their homeland and the resumption of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel, advocated, from its inception, tangible as well as spiritual aims.(Mitchell Bard) Nathan Birnbaum coined the phrase Zionism first in 1890 while describing the rebirth of the Jewish people. Many people view Zionism as just another form of racism being conducted by Israel. Hidden in the definition but not overtly shown is you are not welcome in Israel unless you are a Jew. The Zionist deny that this is racism and claim all people are welcome in Israel so long as you wish to become Jewish by convert if they are not already a Jew.

The similarities in agriculture, manufacturing (imports and exports), and technology bring them close together in their economic position and practices. They also share commonalities in tourism and will continue to be closely knitted together due to foreign aid, which the United States provides to Israel. The Preamble within the Israel-U.S. Free Trade Agreement sums their relationship. “The Government of Israel and the Government of the United States...determined to strengthen and develop the economic relations between them for mutual benefit; ... have decided to conclude this Agreement.”

Both countries share a very similar agricultural system. Subsequently both countries have experienced growth in this sector of their respective economies. A principle factor in raising the value of agriculture production in Israel is the expansion in the amount of irrigated land. Israel’s agriculture has not always been as it is today, primarily due to the scarcity of water. “Today, agriculture represents some 1.5% gross National Product (GNP). Israel produces 93% of its own food requirements.” Israel and the United States have some of the same chief agricultural products. Apples, grapes, cotton and potatoes are just some of the crops. Although other countries rely largely on imported goods, Israel like the United States is primarily self-sustaining in agriculture food imports are actually more for cuisine purposed and not that of need.

There are similarities in the manufacturing sector of both countries particularly in import of goods and services. The United States is the world’s top manufacturing nation. Israel like the United States is a modern industrial country. More than 20 percent of its people work in manufacturing sector of society. Israel is the leading international diamond center, accounting for one quarter of Israel’s exports. Manufactured products are over half of the production of goods for both countries. Some of the manufactured goods that both countries produce are cement, cigarettes, paper, and plastics. The United States is Israel’s leading partner in the import

and exports of goods and services. Some of the imported commodities are machinery, equipment, software, cut diamonds, and chemicals. The United States exports 19.7% to Israel and Israel exports 37.3 % to the United States. Through means of established free trade zones, Israel has enjoyed increased promotion of its commercial and trade interests in the United States. Foreign aid to Israel from the United States continues to tie both countries close to each other as well. The United States to a certain degree also consistently provides aid as a means to persuade certain Israeli behavior. President Ford, in a White House toast to Prime Minister Rabin in September 1974, said “The American people have a great deal of understanding and sympathy and dedication to the same kind of ideals that are representative of Israel.” And, therefore, I think we in America have a certain rapport and understanding with the people of Israel... We have mutual aims and objectives. We have the kind of relationship that I think, if expanded worldwide, would be beneficial to all mankind.”

Once a traditional economy, based on mainly agriculture, light industry and labor intensive production, Israel has begun to become a knowledge-based economy, with internationally competitive telecommunications, high-tech, and agro-technology industries. This advancement makes the United States and Israel closely similar in their economic success. Israel is second only to the United States in pioneering new technologies. The United States is top in high tech start-ups while Israel is second with 1,000. The development of information technology placed Israel’s economy, and mostly its high-tech industries, in the forefront of world development. Like the United States, Israel has a diversified, technologically advanced economy with substantial but decreasing government ownership and a strong high-tech sector. Israel is a world leader in software development as well and ranks second among foreign countries in the number of its companies listed on U.S. stock exchanges.

The United States does not rely solely on tourism for foreign exchange; as does Israel, but both locations receive a large number of tourists each year. "Tourism, one of the country's mainstays and sources of foreign exchange, accounts for more than 1.1 million tourists each year." Israel's geographical diversity, its archaeological and religious sites, the almost unlimited sunshine and modern resort facilities are just a few of the factors that appeal to tourists visiting Israel.

One of the most pronounced obstacles with Mideast peace is the ongoing struggle between the Palestine people and Israel. The U.S. and Israel share the same concerns on this issue. Both countries agree that there is a need to have peaceful relations with Palestine. The U.S. has acted as mediator on several peace accords between Palestine and Israel because both countries have a valid interest in seeing peace throughout the region. Peace in the Middle East would certainly provide more secure living conditions for Israelis and a more stabilized world economy. More importantly a peace accord between Palestine and Israel would ultimately strike a crushing blow to the terrorist efforts of Al Qaeda throughout the world.

Currently, Al Qaeda is disrupting all efforts for Mideast peace and linking all their actions to the plight of the not only the Arab people but Palestinians for a separate state. The U.S. has made it clear that Israel will always remain an ally no matter what the circumstances. This policy puts the U.S. in a precarious position, when it is at the same time trying to persuade Arab countries to be partners in the war on terror.

Israel has been combating terrorism for decades. This obvious struggle has forced them to develop unique security technologies, tactics and procedures to counter terrorism. Experts within the Israeli intelligence assist the U.S. on the whereabouts, organization, and plans of terrorist groups. In the past, Israel has shared intelligence with the United Nations inspection

teams in Iraq, and has also provided intelligence of Iran's accelerated program to develop nuclear weapons.

Israel's intelligence agencies have been and remain a vital source of information to the United States especially with the increased efforts with the war on terrorism. Israel maintains an intelligence agency that can be rated with some of the best in the world and more specifically when it deals with Al Qaeda operations and that of terrorists. Their expertise on counter terrorism, homeland security, defense, and security technology are essential to our efforts on the war on terror. Our military and intelligence cooperation with Israel remains a critical link to our first line of defense in combating terrorism.

The Israeli intelligence agencies are well structured and funded. Each agency has a unique and specifically defined mission, however all information is funneled into the main intelligence resource program. The institute for intelligence and special tasks is called, "The Mossad". This agency is responsible for human intelligence collection, covert actions, and counter terrorism. Israel's security service is called, "Shabak". They are responsible for antiterrorists operations, political subversion, and maintenance of an index on Arab terrorists. The "Aman" is their military intelligence agency. They produce national intelligence estimates for the prime minister, daily intelligence reports, risk of war estimates, target studies and communication interceptions. The Bureau of Scientific Relations known as the "Lekem" is responsible for the collection of scientific and technical intelligence abroad from both open and covert sources.

Israel's knowledge in defense and security technology specifically designed to combat terrorism made an impact on the procedures within the Department of Homeland Security in the U.S. Since then the U.S. has implemented some of the technology and procedures in securing our borders. Some general categories include border security, blast protection, bomb disposal,

facial recognition technology, emergency response, biological weapons detection and countermeasures. These measures have proven to be very successful in Israel in combating terrorist attacks before they can take place though some still manage to hit their target. One positive effect coming from the implementation of the new measures is that since 9/11 terrorists have been incapable of hijacking a plane and using it as a weapon of destruction.

U.S. and Israeli's cooperation also help deter aggression against Israel in the Middle East region. Israel, maintaining the most capable military in the Middle East coupled with the assurance of U.S. military involvement if necessary remains more than enough to repel countries like Iraq, Iran, and Syria from invading her borders on a full scale level. Some of the Arab countries in the Middle East have a long history of aggression and are and remain an imminent and real threat to Israel's security and way of life. With the sharing of intelligence, the U.S. is able to keep a close eye in this unstable region in order to protect our national interest. In addition to the sharing of intelligence, Israel has allowed the United States to preposition and stage military equipment of its borders although disturbing its Arab neighbors in the process. Our presence, shared values of freedom and sanctity of life, need to meet the growing dangers in one of the most volatile regions in the world.

Israel's military technology is very advanced and cost effective. They have one of the world's leading industries in the development of military equipment. For over a decade, our partnership has worked on a number of programs to counter the ballistic missile threat from rouge countries. The most advanced military project is the Arrow missile defense system. This system is designed to shoot down ballistic missiles fired at Israel troops in the Middle East. The research and development of this missile has successfully proven to shoot down another missile at high altitudes. The development of this cutting edge technology assures Israel as a strategic partner to the U.S.

Foreign relations between Israel and the United States will continue because it remains beneficial for both countries strategically. The United States has a footprint in the Middle East through its commitment to Israeli's security and well-being. Shared efforts in peace settlements and the establishment of cooperative institutions in several fields of science and technology have strengthened U.S.-Israeli relations.

Israel is a major ally of the United States. This allows them preferential treatment in defense trades with the U.S. In addition, they have signed a strategic cooperation agreement, which boosts U.S.-Israeli defense ties. The Strategic Policy Planning Group established bilateral cooperation on National Security matters of both countries. The Joint Counter Terrorism Group coordinates joint training, research and development of technologies in order to fight the global war on terror.

Since the attacks of September 11th, the cooperation between the U.S. and Israel has grown stronger. Together, we have made great progress towards the disruption of terrorist organizations throughout the world. However, it has proven to be a tough and difficult battle in which the support and capabilities of nations like Israel are of extreme importance. Our cooperation on military defense and intelligence sharing set the example for other nations to emulate. This is a global war. No country is safe from the threat of terrorism as proved most recently by the terrorist takeover of an elementary school in Russia.

The Geo-Political goal of the United States and Israel's relationship is to insure in purpose and principle the ability to live in peace with countries in the Middle East region. This strategic cooperation was built before the 1948 establishment of Israel. The basis of this alliance is to maintain peace and stability in this troubled part of the world. There is a common bond of friendship between the United States and Israel. President Bush stated, "There is a deep friendship between Israel and the United States, between our people and countries." The basis of

the friendship is common values, a commitment to democratic values, freedom, peace and common interest, including the desire toward regional stability and preventing terrorists and violence. United States and Israel shared relations are built on shared values of democracy, freedom and human rights. Each recognizes the freedom of speech, assembly, worship and rule of law. Both countries promote political negotiation as a path to peace.” Both the United States and Israel recognize the need for strategic cooperation to discourage threats to the regional stability. The strategic cooperation between the United States and Israel is not directed at any country or groups of countries. It is solely for the purpose of defense of both nation-states.

The United States still supports a two state solution; as does the Islamic government of the region. All accept and realize that the key to peace in the region is progress toward the goal of the two independent states. The Israel government supports the United States efforts in mediating the reform of a Palestinian state. Israel realizes that the United States is the best country to work within the international community to promote the reform process, build institutions and improve the economy of the Palestinian people to improve the welfare of its people. Unless the United States and Israel pursue a multidimensional and coordinated policy approach, the United States will be confronted with reacting to crisis rather than preventing and managing them

Israel understands a state of Palestine is necessary for peace and security. Israel longs for peace and security for her people. Currently, both the United States and Israel support a two system for Israel and Palestine. The plan calls for Israel to take certain measures to facilitate the creation of Palestinian state. The plan also calls for Border States and international community to play a role. The plan calls for these countries to provide humanitarian aid to the Palestinians and to provide support for the end of terrorism by the Palestinian leadership. The United States and Israel agree a Palestinian state will never be created by the use of terror tactics, but by

reform. To accomplish this, the United States, Israel, and Arab states must work with Palestinian leaders to create a working government, working democracy and constitution. The international community and World Bank are standing by to oversee the way to reform for a Palestinian state. The major road block to a two way state system is encouragement and support of terrorism by Palestinian leaders. Since both the United States and Israel have been victims of terrorism, they stand together and affirm this as unacceptable. Both nations stand firm and will not support a Palestinian state until its leaders change their relationships with the terrorist groups Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Heboallah. The United States continues to take the lead in efforts to get Jordan, Egypt and others in the international community to assume responsibility and the will of Palestinian state to fight terrorism. The exportation of Middle Eastern terrorism around the world has contributed to the political and economic isolation of the region.

Israel and the United States declare Israel's right to unilateral preemption and anticipatory self-defense under international law (Article 53 of the Vienna Convention). The United States supports Israel's right to defend its borders and to preserve its ability to protect itself against outside threats. Vastly important, the United States will help Israel prepare for a catastrophic first strike. Since the end of the Gulf War, threats to the political security of the Middle East have increased. Tensions between states have continued to threaten the stability of the region. If the Arab-Israeli peace process collapses, there is a potential for agitation in the region.

Domestic developments over the past decade have contributed to the stabilization or destabilization of the region. A new generation of leaders has begun to develop. Education among women and children present a challenge to the traditional social norms. Information from T.V., radio and the internet provide diverse views on political and social change. Together these could bring about major political upheaval. The long-term positive effects could be in the form

of democratization. However; the short-term effect could be economic and political unrest, increased threat of conflict, and unpredictable shifts in political behavior by individual states.

Key loss of Middle Eastern partners such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, and UAE would limit our ability to fight an effective war on terrorism and protect Israel-US interests. In addition, the west's dependence on Middle East oil and the political instability could hurt economies around the world. The United States and Israel must stand together because liberalization will advance very slowly and democratization will be even slower. The United States and Israel must stand together to guide and be an example to other nation-states. The United States seeks through and with its Middle East partner's six goals:

- Countering terrorism
- Countering WMD/E
- Maintain stable oil prices
- Insuring Israeli security
- Promoting democracy and human rights

What is the religious climate in the Middle East, and what is the effect of the U.S-Israeli relationship on this climate? Many in the Muslim world feel that if the west, particularly the U.S, would be fair and evenhanded, Israel would be neutralized, and the Palestinian Arab problems would be resolved. The Muslim world also feels that; (1) A separate Palestinian people exists with historic roots in Palestine, (2) The Zionist Jews stole the land from Palestinian Arabs, and (3) Israel is responsible for the plight of the Arab refugees. (<http://www.palistinefacts.org>) Current U.S. policy may show a one-sided view of Israel to the Arabs if not carried out carefully.

Israel has an unemployment rate of almost 11 percent. Israel produces almost no oil, and relies on imports for all of its needs of this valuable resource. Most of its oil imports come from either Russia or Mexico. Prior to 1948 the Trans-Arabian pipeline crossed through Iraq and

Jordan from Saudi Arabia to the port of Haifa in Israel. This pipeline carried 500,000 bbl/d, but was shut off when the country of Israel came into existence on 14 May 1948. Israel's major exports are machinery and equipment, cut diamonds, chemicals, textiles and apparels, and agriculture products. (www. Eia.doe.gov)

When we look at the possibility of Middle East peace we have to take a hard look at our relationship with Israel, and the viewpoint of the Arab world. Thirteen Arab countries have no ties with Israel. Egypt and Jordan are the only two countries in the 22 members Arab League with any type of ties to Israel. This lack of diplomacy is in direct correlation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (USA Today.com)

There appears to be major issues in the Arab world for the Bush policy of support for Sharon's plans in the West Bank. President Bush has endorsed the Israeli claim to settled property on the West Bank that many feel belong to the Palestinians. This is land seized by Israel in the 1967 war. Several Arab leaders feel that Bush has doomed the peace process because of his new policy. Many had thoughts that the U.S would be the "honest broker" in the Middle East peace process. Since Bush came to office he has totally ignored the late PLO leader Yasser Arafat. Many feel that these policies have, "pretty much put the final nail in the coffin of the peace process with the Arabs." (The Washington report on Middle East affairs)

Pro-Israel Jews are deeply grateful to President Bush for his support of Israel. Bush has taken steps that no President has taken before. He has refused to deal with PLO leader Yasser Arafat, and rejects the Palestinian claim of a "right of return" to Israel. President Bush declared, "Israel is a democracy, and a friend, and has every right to defend itself from terror". (Qtd. in National Journal) Bush endorsed Sharon's plan for separation between Israel, and the Palestinians. Presidential candidate John Kerry also followed suit with a full endorsement.

(National Journal, Washington) This policy of unwavering support could be detrimental to any peace process.

The military, and intelligence link between the U.S and Israel is considered by many as the most important connection between the two countries. The Arab viewpoint is that Syria is the top priority to the IDF. It is also felt that the next move by the U.S-Israeli alliance will be to eliminate the Syrian Army, in the same manner the U.S-led coalition eliminated the Iraqi Army. Defeating Syria would secure Israel from the north and the east. And, this would open the door for Jewish penetration, and expansion in the region. (<http://www.arabview.com>)

One example of how the U.S actions encourage anti-American sentiment in the Arab world is the sales of military equipment, and ammunition to Israel. The U.S will sale 5,000 smart bombs to Israel for \$319 million. The funding will come from U.S military aid to Israel. Basically, we will pay the bill for these bombs. The Pentagon told Congress the bombs are meant to maintain Israel's qualitative advantage, and advance U.S strategic and tactical interests. These bombs vary in size and capabilities. The IDF used a one-ton bomb in July 2002 to kill a senior Hamas leader, but also killed 15 Palestinian civilians in the attack. (<http://www.haaretzdaily.com>) Why would the Arab countries feel the way they do about the so-called U.S-Israeli axis? Is the U.S promoting a peace plan in the Middle East?

In the case of Jonathon Pollard, a former U.S Navy intelligence officer was convicted in 1986 of spying for Israel. We now have a new case of an American Pentagon official that could be arrested on charges of improperly spying for Israel, and passing along top secret information about Iran to empower Israel into manipulating U.S military action against that country. This latest scandal offers proof of Israel's role in prodding America into another military operation in Iran or possibly Syria. (<http://washingtontimes.com>) What need do our friends the Israeli's have

for spying on us? Or, maybe it is a case of using the United States as a puppet to accomplish military action against Arab countries in the Middle East.

Though there are differing viewpoints it can clearly be stated that the pros outweigh the cons and the country of Israel remains an area of strong strategic interest to the United States. It may be difficult to accomplish the goals we wish to accomplish in the Middle East if we continue to show outright support for Israel. No President could however in with the approval of the people turn his back on another democratic society that so closely resembles our own.

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